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(Letters to the Editor section)

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VA LA JOLLA EXPERIENCE DRAWS HIGH PRAISE

I would like to respond to R.D. West's question of why only civilian hospitals were critiqued on death rates and not local military/veterans facilities ("Cover military hospitals?" Letters, May 3).

While I cannot address the issue of heart bypass deaths at the VA La Jolla, I can speak from experience when I say their treatment of my heart condition and recent cancer surgery has been exemplar.

Having been treated in the civilian sector for most of my 47 years, my experience at the VA is head and shoulders above the HMOs and the like that I have endured. All the physicians at the VA are well trained and actually spend more than 5 minutes discussing your case with you.

I've even had my doctor call me at home to discuss my test results or a change in medication. I have never received that level of care from any HMO physician. Never. And the members of the nursing staff are angels who go out of their way to treat the patients, make them comfortable and answer any questions.

As a matter of fact, throughout the La Jolla VA, there are signs encouraging patients and relatives, "Ask a Nurse, they love to teach and inform you."

PATRICK J. BLAKE II
U.S. Marine Corps veteran
San Diego